Title
The Orphan in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: The Vicissitudes of the Eighteenth-Century Subject

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The Orphan in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: The Vicissitudes of the Eighteenth-Century Subject. By Eva König. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2014. vii+277 pp. £55. ISBN 978–1–137–38201–6.

R05192 Since Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* was first published (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), many studies have drawn attention to the persistence of romance elements in the eighteenth-century novel. In this vein, Eva König focuses upon the literary figure of the orphan, a character archetype familiar from fairy tale. Approaching this figure's incarnation in the eighteenth-century novel from a psychoanalytic perspective, König contends that literary representations of orphans represent anxieties about the nature of bourgeois identity in the eighteenth century. König seeks to supplement Helene Moglen's work on gender and the novel by drawing upon an expanded set of source texts by both male and female writers. König argues that orphan plots and figures gradually shift over the course of the century, and turns to Jacques Lacan's theory of subject formation to trace this shift.

According to König, then, in early eighteenth-century fiction orphans exhibit the fluid identity associated with the Lacanian Real, as exemplified by the ambiguous social status of bastards and foundlings in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. The second phase in the infant's psychic development, in which the child gradually becomes aware of its own identity as an entity distinct from its mother and from the external world, corresponds to mid-century novels featuring motherless heiresses, exemplified in fictions by Eliza Haywood, Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Burney, and Charlotte Lennox. The final phase of the infant's development entails the child's acceptance of the Symbolic order, and corresponds to late eighteenth-century novels that stage conflicts between embattled heroines and repressive father figures.

König's localized readings do offer much insightful analysis. For example, the chapter on *Tom Jones* makes interesting observations about Fielding's use of bastardy as a metaphor for novel-writing (p. 41) and his interest in the Foundling Hospital (p. 42); the chapter on *The Female Quixote* convincingly shows how Arabella's captivation by her own image in her looking-glass emblematizes a broader theme of misrecognition (pp. 92–93); and the concluding analysis of *Persuasion* interestingly reads Anne Elliot as a symbolically self-orphaning character (p. 239). Overall, this is a well-organized, fluently written study, and I also applaud the wide range of texts that König discusses, which includes works by authors such as Mary Hays, Charlotte Smith, and Clara Reeve.

My main reservations about König's study concern its implementation of the Lacanian framework, which I found overly schematic and somewhat arbitrary. In using Lacan's ideas to argue that the eighteenth-century novel progressively tracks the 'move towards a civilized—that is, a docile and obedient—subject', König insists on interpreting early novels as the primitive expressions of a nascent bourgeois subject, an approach that sometimes feels limiting (p. 243). Why a Lacanian framework

is especially fruitful for interpreting eighteenth-century fiction is also insufficiently explained.

On a more local level, the translation of each novel into Lacanian terms does not always supplement König's own astute analysis. For example, only the final two pages of the *Tom Jones* chapter address in detail how the novel embodies the Lacanian Real, and this discussion feels somewhat extraneous to the chapter's otherwise interesting argument. This is not to say that a psychoanalytic framework is *per se* not valuable, but that this approach is more illuminating for eighteenth-century fiction when it is wedded more concretely to eighteenth-century interpretative discourses, as it is in Jesse Molesworth's notion of the 'Humean Real' (See *Chance and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Realism, Probability, Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)). While the field of secondary literature is endless, I also found it surprising that König's study made no reference at all to another recent study on the figure of the orphan, Cheryl L. Nixon's *The Orphan in Eighteenth-Century Law and Literature: Estate, Blood, and the Body* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), especially as many of König's potential readers will probably be consulting both works. König's study nonetheless remains a valuable contribution to studies of identity in the novel, one which convincingly argues for the significance of orphaned characters in eighteenth-century fiction, and which makes a clear argument for the psychic function of narratives featuring orphan figures. This is an argument that other scholars will profitably be able to build upon and refine.

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